

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MINUTES

November 8, 2010 City Hall, Rm 209, 6:30 p.m.
1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Members Present:

Jane Brown
Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Lucie Chansky
Jini Fairley
Rosemary Larking
Heather Platt
Girard Plante, Co-Chair

Staff Present:

Kathleen Cahill, Community Development Senior Planner
David Olson, City Clerk
Amy Yuhasz, Associate Director for Housing and Community Development

Public Present:

Gary Alpert

Regrets:

Jeff Hutter
Barbara Lischinsky
Jason Rosenberg

R. Caruso called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and notified all in attendance that the meeting was being audio recorded.

1. **Minutes:** Consider approval of the minutes from the October 18, 2010 meeting of the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities

J. Brown moved that the minutes be approved. H. Platt seconded the motion and the Board voted 6-0-0 to approve the minutes.

2. **Discussion and Recommendations:** David Koses, Transportation Planner requesting a handicap parking space on Jackson Road in the vicinity of the Jackson Homestead; Alderman Linsky requesting an evaluation of the potential modification to the handicapped space on Madison Avenue created by TC2-09; Lois Maisel requesting handicap parking space in front of 434 Lowell Avenue; and Diane Cotting requesting a handicap parking space in front of 4 Hovey Street.

The Committee discussed the proposed handicap parking space on Jackson Road. Members had concerns about locating the spot on this road (on the opposite side of the Museum) because of the large amount of traffic on Jackson Road. In additional concern of the Committee is that the door that would serve the proposed handicap space is not accessible to people who use a wheelchair. Both Community Preservation funds and Community Development Block Grant Access funds have been allocated to improve the accessibility of the Museum building. R. Larking made a motion that the request for the handicap parking space be reconsidered once the accessible improvements to the Jackson Homestead have been completed or are near completion. J. Brown seconded the motion and the Board voted 7-0-0 to revisit the request for a handicap parking space for the Jackson Homestead after renovations to the building have been completed.

The Committee discussed Alderman Linsky's request for an evaluation of the potential modification to the handicap space on Madison Avenue created by TC2-09. When the original request for a handicap space on Walnut Street came before the Committee (TC2-09) the recommendation to the Traffic Council called for the installation of two handicap spaces located on either side of the crosswalk on Walnut Street. The Traffic Council voted to located one space on Madison Avenue, perpendicular to Walnut Street. Members of the Committee indicated that this space is very difficult to find. L. Chanksy made a motion to convert the handicap parking space on Madison Avenue to a standard space and re-issue the Committee's original recommendation that two handicap spaces be located on Walnut Street. G. Plante seconded the motion and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the recommendation.

The Committee discussed Lois Maisel's request for a handicap parking space in front of 434 Lowell Avenue. L. Chanksy made a motion to recommend a handicap parking space in front of 434 Lowell and if this location was not possible due to overall parking restrictions the handicap space should be located directly across the street from 434 Lowell Avenue. H. Platt seconded the motion and the Committee voted 6-1-0 to recommend the handicap parking space in front of 434 Lowell Avenue.

The Committee considered Diane Cotting's request for a handicap parking space in front of 4 Hovey Street which members believed was a well suited location. L. Chansky made a motion that a handicap parking space be installed in front of 4 Hovey Street; the exact location to be determined by the Traffic Council. Girard seconded the motion and the Committee voted 5-0-0 to recommend the handicap parking space in front of 434 Lowell Avenue (two members were otherwise disposed and unable to vote on this item).

3. Project Report: CDBG funded access projects including discussion of announcements of available funding for Access Project TBD (CD1103H)

K. Cahill stated that she received a quote of \$8,800 for the installation of four accessible buttons, a stub pole, and the removal of a crosswalk at Washington Street by the Newton-Wellesley Hospital. The general consensus of the Committee was to move forward with this priority intersection.

Staff was notified that the Mayor will be scheduling a meeting with the co-chairs to discuss accessible improvements at Washington and Commonwealth Avenue. During this meeting the Mayor will also discuss the plans for a transition from a Committee to a Commission. Committee members wondered if the Police Department had calculated how much the City receives in handicap parking violation funds. This figure has been estimated at \$300,000 (annually).

The general consensus of the Committee is that the funding for accessible improvements at Washington and Commonwealth Avenue should come from the City's general revenue. CDBG funds should only be utilized if other funds are not available.

K. Cahill mentioned that staff has been receiving inquiries about the availability of CDBG access funds. It seems best to announce the availability of funding for these types of projects. This would include: \$8,000 in FY11 to be determined funds, \$8,000 in FY12 funds to be determined funds and \$5,000 in cancelled projects funds (the Crystal Lake Accessible Pathway project (FY12) was cancelled due to lack of movement on the execution of the Master Plan). The consensus of the Committee was to wait until decisions were made about the proposed accessible improvements at Washington and Commonwealth Avenue before issuing this announcement. K. Cahill also mentioned that the Newton Community Service Center has recently announced plans to sell the Bibbo Center on Cherry Street. A total of \$27,100 in FY13 CDBG access was allocated to the installation of a lift in the Bibbo Center. If this building is sold the project will be cancelled.

The Committee agreed to revisit the announcement of available funding at their December 13 meeting. Members agreed that an additional meeting could be scheduled in January to review applications, if necessary.

4. Other Business: Update on member meeting with NCDF

R. Larking provided a summary of her meeting with the Newton Community Development Foundation. In addition to R. Larking R. Caruso and K. Cahill also

attended the meeting. The policies and procedures for tenant grievances and reasonable accommodations were reviewed at the meeting. The grievance process begins with the Assistant Property Manager (Marissa) and if the tenant is not satisfied with this result they have the opportunity to speak with the Executive Director. If this meeting does not resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the tenant they then have the right to appeal to the organization's Board of Directors. The reasonable accommodation process was also reviewed. This process includes meeting with Ruth Apfelbaum in order to file a request for a reasonable accommodation. NCDF has thirty days to respond to this request.

R. Larking plans to file a request for a reasonable accommodation to have her air conditioner removed and to request that notices be displayed on the bulletin board at a lower level. Rosemary has also submitted a letter requesting that NCDF refrain from sharing the letter she received from NCDF scheduling this meeting based on the fact that the content of the letter does not reflect her tenure.

R. Larking, K. Cahill and R. Caruso all reviewed NCDF's policy with regards to the heat and air conditioning. NCDF is required to run the heat from September 15 through June 15. NCDF will only veer from this policy if 100 percent of the Warren House tenants provide consent to turn off the heat before June 15 (in the event of a warm spring) or turn on the heat later than September 15 (in the event of a warm fall).

K. Cahill mentioned that Jeanne Strickland, the Executive Director of Newton Community Development Foundation took note of this item on the Mayor's Committee's agenda. Although Ms. Strickland refrained from attending the meeting because she did not want to affect the Committee's ability to discuss the item openly she did want to communicate to the Committee that she would be happy to attend and collaborate with members at any point.

5. Report: Report on the activities of the Fair Housing Committee by Girard Plante

G. Plante debriefed the Mayor's Committee on the work of the Fair Housing Committee. The Fair Housing Committee is planning to hold a public hearing on the draft accessibility report which is scheduled to be completed by the City Accessibility Consultant, Barbara Chandler, December 6. The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities as well as the general public will have the opportunity to make comments on the draft plan.

The Fair Housing Committee will be focusing on education, outreach and training over the next fiscal year. Last week a landlord resource fair was held at Lasell College. The resource fair offered information on lead based paint removal and Section 8 Vouchers to landlords. The fair was very well attended and the Fair Housing Committee hopes to repeat the event annually.

6. Report: Report on latest meeting of the Design Review Team by Rob Caruso.

R. Caruso reported on the Design Review Team (DRT) meeting during which CAN-DO presented their proposed project - 61 Pearl Street. The project involves the conversion of 4 units into 3 units of affordable, rental housing. The ground floor unit will be accessible to people with mobility impairments. The Committee received an email from Mr. Lepie which raised concern over the units' cost.

A. Yuhasz explained that the DRT meeting was the first step in a review process that will involve several opportunities for public input. The Newton Housing Partnership meets this week and the members of the Partnership will be weighing the cost of constructing the units against the benefits of generating affordable housing. Mr. Lepie's email was also sent to the members of both the Housing Partnership and the Planning and Development Board. The Partnership's recommendation will go before the Planning and Development Board, which is another opportunity for the public to weigh in about the proposed project.

7. Other Business: webpage update, holiday party and guest invitation for other meetings.

The Committee members have decided to review websites of communities with disability commissions in order to garner ideas to improve Newton's webpage for the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities. H. Platt reviewed her research on the Watertown Disability Commission's webpage. The website includes: a dining guide on accessible restaurants, information on disability awareness training conducted by the Commission, a link to an article on new federal accessibility regulations, and information on additional resources in addition to minutes and agendas. Waltham's webpage for their Commission included basic information on the members of the Commission.

The Committee decided to have a small party at December meeting.

Debby Smith, the Outreach Coordinator at the Perkins Braille and Talking Book Library has offered to attend the December meeting of the Committee. Members agreed that this would be an interesting and informative guest speaker. The Committee would also like to invite someone from the Carroll Center to speak at a future meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.